Transimperial Roots of American Anti-Imperialism: The Transatlantic Radicalism of Free Trade, 1846-1920

[Chapter forthcoming in Kristin Hoganson and Jay Sexton, eds., *Powering Up the Global: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain* (Duke University Press, in press).]

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"The clear connection between the anti-imperialist movement and earlier movements for liberal reform has never received much attention," Christopher Lasch observed sixty years ago. Despite the distance of time, his observation still remains remarkably salient today. Most scholarship on the American Anti-Imperialist League (AIL, 1898-1920) has continued to focus narrowly on the period between its founding in 1898 during the Spanish-American War and the end of the U.S. war in the Philippines in 1902. This chronological narrowing not only sidelines the continued anti-imperial activities of the AIL leaders in the years that followed; it also hides U.S. anti-imperial efforts to thwart transimperial projects in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Asia-Pacific in the decades that preceded the formation of the AIL.[1]

Considering that historians have long associated free trade with late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Anglo-American imperialism, this story begins at what, at first sight, might seem an unlikely starting point: the mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American free-trade movement. Although this might at first bring to mind imperial ambitions of worldwide market access, meaning access to an entire imperial world system, free-trade ideas in fact spurred U.S. anti-imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century. Going well beyond opposition to mercantilist policies intended to benefit particular empires, they contained a far larger imperial critique. Paying closer attention to the free-trade ideas that spurred turn-of-the-century American anti-imperialists can help us locate what Jay Sexton and Ian Tyrrell recently described as "the lost cosmopolitanism of anti-imperialist adherents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."[2]

The economic cosmopolitan motivations of American anti-imperialists have been either misrepresented or marginalized or both.[3] Recent scholarship on American anti-imperialist ideologies has tended to focus on culture and politics rather than economics.[4] The older "Wisconsin School" of diplomatic history did place due importance upon the economic ideas of AIL leaders. However, using a New Left brush, the Wisconsin School took the opportunity to paint the leading turn-of-the-century anti-imperialists as informal imperialists. Wisconsinite scholars deemed all forms of U.S. economic expansion – including peaceful, non-coercive foreign market expansion — as imperialistic. Even the widespread pacific AIL advocacy of free-trade internationalism struck these scholars as an example of what Wisconsin School founder William Appleman Williams described as "imperial anti-colonialism."[5] This New Left rebranding thereby hid the extent to which the era's leading anti-imperialists opposed not only formal imperialism but also informal economic imperialism.[6]

This chapter argues that the AIL leadership's widespread subscription to free-trade ideas, emanating from the metropolitan heart of the British Empire, underpinned their anti-imperial moralism. The British-born free-trade ideas of the 1830s and 1840s – what Richard Huzzey calls "the moral economy of free trade" – conditioned the institutions and ideas of American anti-imperialism from the mid-nineteenth to the

early twentieth century, when the U.S. imperial project came to encompass large swaths of the Caribbean and the Asia-Pacific formerly under the sway of the Spanish Empire.[7] Businessmen and nationalists in the former Spanish colonies, desiring to control their own tariff policies and to have free access to the U.S. market, thereupon embodied the broader anti-imperialist critique of U.S. protectionist imperialism. American anti-imperial activism, intersecting as it did with the British, Spanish, and U.S. empires, must therefore be understood as a transimperial phenomenon. As Michael Cullinane demonstrates, the U.S. anti-imperialist movement was far from a purely domestic affair; strong transatlantic ties connected American anti-imperialists with their European counterparts.[8] But this anti-imperial story is incomplete without a study of AIL leaders' commitment to British free-trade ideas. Their economic cosmopolitanism – meaning their conviction that free-trade internationalism laid the economic foundations for world peace and prosperity — was a crucial component of what Leslie Butler describes as the AIL's "progressive Anglo-American tradition."[9] Their subscription to British free-trade ideas was thus also in part an attempt to counter the widespread prevalence of Anglophobia and empire building among the Republican Party's protectionist majority.[10] Considering the Anglophilia of most of the AIL leaders, the transatlanticism of their economic beliefs should come as little surprise. It should be less surprising still considering that economic ideas had long been entwined with Anglo-American anti-imperial debates.[11]

Misrepresentations of both the turn-of-the-century American political economy and the ill-named Open Door Empire as free trade in character have hidden the radical nature of anti-imperialists' economic cosmopolitanism.[12] The predominance of economic nationalist ideas and policies in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American trade politics underpinned the GOP's push for an American Closed Door empire and informed the British-influenced free-trade critique of U.S. colonialism. Whereas Britain had turned to free trade at mid-century, protectionist ideas and policies triumphed in the United States from the 1860s onwards.[13] From the crucible of the Civil War, the Republican Party emerged as the party of economic nationalism. It dominated the executive branch of government for more than half a century. Only two Democrats, Grover Cleveland (1885-89, 1893-97) and Woodrow Wilson (1913-21), held the presidency during the seventy-two-year period between 1861 and 1933. The GOP also controlled a good portion of the Supreme Court and Congress for much of this time, including both houses of Congress between 1897 and 1911, the era's most significant period of U.S. colonial expansion and policymaking.[14] The resulting protectionist makeup of the U.S. imperial economic system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries catalyzed the economic cosmopolitanism of American anti-imperialists.

American anti-imperial understandings of protectionist economic policies were shaped by a British anti-imperial free-trade tradition stretching back to the late eighteenth century. Writing *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) amid the outbreak of the American Revolution, Adam Smith had condemned mercantilist protectionism for breeding state-sponsored monopolies and for drumming up nationalistic support for expensive and unnecessary colonial enterprises.[15] Smith's mid-nineteenth-century disciples in Europe and North America, most notably the British radical politician Richard Cobden (1804-1865), developed this connection further, drawing a direct ideological line between economic nationalism and imperialism, and, conversely, economic cosmopolitanism and anti-imperialism.[16] In 1962, historian Oliver MacDonagh termed this ideological confluence of economic cosmopolitanism, peace, and anti-imperialism within Britain "the anti-imperialism of free trade."[17] This Anglo-

American Cobdenite anti-imperial tradition was rich, giving birth to the even more radical free-trade ideas of American political philosopher Henry George in the 1870s and 1880s. These same free-trade ideas, crisscrossing the Atlantic between the 1840s and the First World War, animated anti-imperial opposition to the American Empire.

Transimperial Emergence of the Economic Cosmopolitan Critique of Imperialism

The economic cosmopolitan critique of imperialism made its controversial entry into mainstream British politics in the 1830s and 1840s. Its arrival was an internationalist offshoot of the era's British free-trade movement. Spearheading both was the Liberal radical parliamentarian, Manchester manufacturer, abolitionist, and peace activist Richard Cobden. He and the other leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL), active from 1839-1846, set out to eliminate Britain's protective tariffs on foreign grain for three key reasons: to provide cheap bread to the starving masses; to undermine the undue political influence of the country's militant landed elite; and to create a more peaceful world. Building upon the pacific internationalist elements of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, Cobden and his disciples – known as Cobdenites or the Manchester School — believed that creating a globally integrated marketplace through free trade would eliminate the main political and economic causes of war and imperial expansion. Following the termination of the Corn Laws in 1846, Cobden and his followers set out to spread his anti-imperial gospel of free trade to the rest of the world. Cobden himself became an outspoken critic of British imperialism and a leader of the mid-century international peace movement, as did many of his disciples within the rising American Empire.[18]

Beyond the borders of the United Kingdom, Cobden's economic cosmopolitanism found its most numerous subscribers in the American northeast. These American Cobdenites were involved in myriad transatlantic reform movements throughout the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the closely related international peace, anti-imperialist, and abolitionist movements.[19] Cobden's American free-trade disciples included abolitionists from Boston and New York City like William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Sumner, William Cullen Bryant, and Henry Ward Beecher. For these abolitionists, free trade was thought to be the next peaceful and prosperous step in the emancipation of mankind, whereas protectionism shackled consumers and laborers to the dictates of special interests, fostering in the process monopolies and geopolitical tensions that too often led to militarism and war.[20] In the 1850s, this radical minority of northeastern Cobdenites supported the newly formed Republican Party owing to its ideological dedication to free labor, free soil, and antislavery. The members of the Republican Party's Cobdenite minority were well aware that they were outnumbered by the party's economic nationalists, but were not put off; freeing American slaves was a more immediate priority than freeing American trade.

When the U.S. Civil War broke out, the primary underlying cause of slavery was initially obfuscated across the Atlantic. As a result, Cobden and other British abolitionists were at first confused about its causes; the North's initial unwillingness to make emancipation a war aim at first made it seem to many Britons as though the conflict pitted a free-trade south against a protectionist north. This common British misperception was corrected by 1863, owing to the propaganda efforts of various transatlantic Cobdenites and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.[21] Upon the war's

end in 1865, these independent Republican free traders, seeing direct parallels between themselves and the small but well mobilized ACLL in Britain, hoped to duplicate British free traders' successes.[22]

The Cobdenite free-trade-and-peace movement in the United States picked up pace immediately following the U.S. Civil War with the founding of London's Cobden Club. The club was established soon after Cobden's 1865 death, and one of its goals was to overturn the American protectionist system. More broadly, the club desired world peace through international arbitration, noninterventionism, and free trade. The Cobden Club's pacific global economic vision was enshrined in its motto: "Free Trade, Peace, and Goodwill among Nations."

In emulation of the ACLL, the American Free Trade League (AFTL) was established in New York City just after the Civil War in order to spread Cobdenism to the United States. Its founders (or marquee members) included abolitionists William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *New York Post*; Horace White, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*; Ohio politician Jacob D. Cox; and Boston's Edward Atkinson. In the decades that followed, regional affiliates of this first national American Cobden Club popped up across the American north and west. The AFTL's "Declaration of Principles" declared "Free Trade" to be "the natural and proper term in the series of progress after Free Speech, Free Soil and Free Labor." The AFTL's monthly newspaper, *The League*, was named after the ACLL's circular, and the AFTL newspaper took for its motto a line from Richard Cobden, "Free-Trade: The International Common Law of the Almighty." In 1868 *The League*, rebranding itself *The Free-Trader*, saw its circulation jump from 4,000 to 16,000 between 1869 and 1870 alone, and its articles reportedly made their way to "nearly every newspaper in the United States."[23] As it grew in influence, the AFTL continued to work closely with London's Cobden Club. The Cobden Club's international membership roles, in turn, swelled with the addition of large numbers of AFTL members.[24]

Economist and independent Republican David Ames Wells soon took charge of the post-Civil-War Cobdenite movement in the United States. Following a trip to England in the late 1860s, Wells, a protectionist, had come around to the belief that universal free trade was "in accordance with the teachings of nature," and that free trade was "most conducive to the maintenance of international peace and to the prevention of wars."[25] Wells became president of the AFTL in 1871, and was deputized as the American secretary of the London Cobden Club not long after.

Under Wells's leadership, the AFTL quickly developed a nationwide propaganda campaign. Henry Ward Beecher, Edward Atkinson, William Lloyd Garrison, and legalist David Dudley Field, among others, lent the American free-trade movement added gravitas and publicity with their AFTL-sponsored speaking tours across the country. Other notable early AFTL members included transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson; Reverend Joshua Leavitt, founder of the Liberty Party; the founding editor of the *Nation*, E. L. Godkin; and a young journalist from San Francisco named Henry George.[26]

A desire to ease Anglo-American tensions helped motivate transatlantic Cobdenite peace and anti-imperial efforts, especially when it came to Canadian-American relations. Cobdenite critics of imperialism and war shared a desire to end Canadian-American conflict, which loomed large in the years after 1865 thanks to Fenian radicalism and calls for U.S. annexation, by liberalizing trade between the British settler colony and the United States.[27]

British émigré Goldwin Smith took a lead role in the North American free-trade-and-peace movement. The English-born radical journalist and Cobden Club member

had been the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford before immigrating to the United States in 1868 to teach at Cornell University. Finding the anti-British sentiment of the times too much to handle, Smith moved to Toronto three years after his American arrival.[28] There he became probably the most outspoken Cobdenite advocate of devolving the British Empire through the emancipation of its colonies while maintaining informal free-trade relations. Pro-imperial opponents dubbed this the "Manchester Colonial Theory."

Thanks to the efforts of Goldwin Smith, the Cobdenite Manchester School's call for devolving imperial control over the colonies had become popular in Canada at mid-century. Smith was among the most prominent within the Manchester School in criticizing the British Empire for being atavistic, undemocratic, and unnecessarily expensive. He and others of the Manchester School instead advocated for the empire's devolution and dissolution, which earned them the diminutive moniker "Little Englanders." They proposed instead that the ties between the motherland and her colonies could peacefully and profitably be maintained through free trade, free migration, and friendly relations.[29] As early as 1863, Smith had advocated for greater political and fiscal autonomy for the empire's settler colonies, and he became a vocal proponent of Canadian independence. After Canadian confederation in 1867, Smith became the leader of the Canadian movement for commercial union between Canada and the United States. For Smith, it was only natural that the two countries should become economically integrated, considering their already strong trade links, alongside their common Anglo-Saxon heritage and geographic proximity.

Goldwin Smith found numerous free-trade-and-peace allies among America's Cobdenite Anglophiles. The AFTL lobbied on behalf of Canadian-American trade reciprocity, and David Ames Wells, William Cullen Bryant, Arthur Latham Perry, and Cyrus Field also lent their support to the short-lived American Commercial Reciprocity League with the aim of informing U.S. public opinion about the potential benefits of Canadian-American trade liberalization. AFTL and Cobden Club member Henry George, in his popular book *Protection or Free Trade* (1886), similarly advocated for Canadian-American free trade, "fraternity and peace" to counter the era's "spirit of protectionism . . . national enmity and strife."[30] These North American Manchester School efforts claimed tangible success in the late 1880s when the Canadian Liberal Party endorsed American commercial union in its party platform. Canada's protectionist Conservative Party instead supported closer trade ties within the British Empire through a policy of imperial trade preference. Following Republican passage of the protectionist McKinley Tariff of 1890 (which excluded Canada from establishing reciprocal trade with the United States), the Conservatives narrowly came out on top in Canada's 1891 federal election, and with it came further Canadian-American trade disputes and mutual fears of military invasion by one side or the other for decades to come.[31]

In the Caribbean sphere, American Cobdenite leaders similarly opposed the Republican Party's imperial designs on annexing Santo Domingo in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1870, former Ohio governor and AFTL co-founder Jacob D. Cox resigned as U.S. Grant's Interior Minister over the annexation issue; Charles Sumner was forced out of his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee owing to his opposition; and David Wells was fired from his position as Special Commissioner of the Revenue.[32] When the Republicans again raised the specter of annexation in the early 1880s, New York City's R. R. Bowker asked why the United States should not instead try to gain access to the markets of Santo Domingo "without the cost of annexation" through the anti-imperialism of free trade? And why limit U.S. market

expansion just to Santo Domingo, when the United States might also trade freely with South America, Canada, the whole world even, thereby making America "the apostle among nations of the gospel of 'peace on earth, good-will among men'"?[33]

New Left scholars have portrayed calls like Bowker's for free trade with Santo Domingo and the world as bids for informal imperialism. Through a neo-Marxist lens, all forms of foreign market expansion appeared imperialistic, regardless of the tactics, ideologies, or policies involved in expanding U.S. trade abroad. But Bowker did not join with the economic nationalists of the Republican Party in calling for coercively opening up the markets of the world; rather, he suggested that the U.S. adopt free trade as an anti-imperial policy for peaceful market expansion through mutual "good will." Much as MacDonagh argued for British Cobdenites, the U.S. Cobdenite espousal of the anti-imperialism of free trade should not be misconstrued as informal imperialism.

That said, some American anti-imperialists did gaze upon the British Empire with rose-tinted glasses owing to their Anglo-Saxonist leanings. For some of the most extreme Cobdenite Anglophiles, their belief in the superiority of what they considered to be a shared Anglo-Saxonism informed their belief that British free trade was not only good for the United States but also for the world. This meant that even as American anti-imperialists demonstrated a critical awareness of the Republican Party's imperialism of economic nationalism, they sometimes turned a blind eye to the coercive implementation of British free-trade imperialism in places like India and South America.[34] But such instances were exceptional cases, rather than the rule. As Patterson notes, by and large "while they admired the British tradition of liberty and British achievements in literature, commerce, and industry, they had little sympathy with British imperialism." They were careful to distinguish "between its 'false' imperialistic tradition of Benjamin Disraeli, Joseph Chamberlain, and Cecil Rhodes and the 'true' England of Richard Cobden, John Bright, John Morley, and William Gladstone, all anti-imperial Liberals."[35]

Inspired by these British anti-imperial Liberals, American Cobdenites were able to steer American anti-imperial policies more directly during the two non-consecutive Democratic administrations of Grover Cleveland (1885-89, 1893-97). President Cleveland surrounded himself with American Cobdenites as cabinet appointments (including his secretaries of state, war, agriculture, treasury, and the interior) and as unofficial economic advisors. As a result, Cleveland's administrations sought out more amicable Anglo-American relations, and demonstrated a clear Cobdenite propensity for foreign policy non-interventionism and trade liberalization to create a more peaceful world order.

The new administration's anti-imperial leanings became evident almost as soon as Cleveland entered the White House in 1885 through its opposition to Republican imperial projects in Latin America, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific. In Latin America, for example, whereas Republican economic nationalists like James G. Blaine of Maine – the Republican presidential nominee in 1884 – sought U.S. imperial control over any canal attempts in Central America, Cleveland and his cabinet opposed the Republican Party's planned construction of a Nicaraguan canal and the annexation of the territory surrounding it.[36] Cleveland's protectionist opponents were quick to attack the Cleveland administration's early Cobdenite anti-imperial tendencies and pro-British sympathies.

With regard to Africa, Cleveland and his Cobdenites continued their opposition to coercive Republican imperialism by distancing the United States from the previous administration's imperial designs in the Congo, where the issue of free trade once

again played a controversial role. American Cobdenites looked askance upon the 1884 Berlin Conference resolutions and their implications for possible U.S. territorial annexation and political entanglements in Africa, despite attempts by proponents of the imperialistic resolutions to couch the initiative in free-trade verbiage.[37] In 1885 Cleveland and his cabinet were quick to revoke U.S. recognition of the Berlin treaty and refused to submit it for congressional approval.[38]

In the Asia-Pacific, Cleveland's Cobdenite anti-imperial approach once again contrasted with that of his Republican counterparts when, in a January 1887 special message to Congress, Cleveland "insisted that autonomy and independence of Samoa should be scrupulously preserved." At the Washington Conference held later that year, Cleveland's Cobdenite secretary of state, Thomas Bayard, fought for Samoan independence, insisting that "the independence and autonomy" of Samoa "be preserved free from the control or preponderating influence of any foreign government." Cleveland thereafter attempted to devolve American informal influence entirely from Samoa during his second administration.[39] Upon entering the Oval Office for a second term in early 1893, Cleveland also reversed his Republican presidential predecessor's recent attempts to annex Hawai'i. Cobdenite Carl Schurz lobbied the cabinet against annexation and Roger Q. Mills denounced annexation in the Senate. Pro-free-trade news outlets like the *New York World*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Evening Post*, and the *Nation* castigated Hawaii's U.S.-dominated "Sugar Trust" for fomenting the annexationist agitation.[40] From the Congo to Samoa to Hawaii, Cleveland's Cobdenites had begun implementing the anti-imperialism of free trade.

When Cleveland's Cobdenites denied the Republican economic nationalists their colonial prizes in the Asia-Pacific, they took aim at the cabinet's British-influenced anti-imperialism of free trade. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) railed against the Democratic Party's abandonment of its once-great Jeffersonian legacy of territorial expansion. He charged the Cleveland Administration with conspiring "to overthrow American interests and American control in Hawaii" and "to abandon Samoa." The Democratic leadership had "been successfully Cobdenized." This was "the underlying reason for their policy of retreat. . . . We have had something too much of these disciples of the Manchester school." Theodore Roosevelt, Lodge's protégé, privately expressed similar sentiments to Lodge: "As you say, thank God I am not a free-trader. In this country pernicious indulgence in the doctrine of free trade seems inevitably to produce fatty degeneration of the moral fibre." He also suggested that the incarceration of the pro-free-trade, "peace at any price men" editors of the *New York Evening Post* and the *New York World* would bring him "great pleasure."[41]

Roosevelt and Lodge's protectionist worries about the demise of the American imperial spirit proved to be unwarranted. The timing of the U.S. declaration of war against the Spanish Empire soon after William McKinley, the GOP's "Napoleon of Protection," moved into the White House and the Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress in 1897 was no coincidence. The subsequent colonial spoils catalyzed renewed anti-imperial mobilization from American economic cosmopolitans.

The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade's Transimperial Crossings

The anti-imperialism of free trade crossed into the transimperial terrain of the Spanish Empire in 1898. The AIL, founded by American Cobdenites soon after the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, became the country's most visible U.S. anti-

imperialist organization, with local chapters spread throughout the country. Historians long have noted how the anti-imperialists of 1898 were a diverse group. But AIL officers were connected by the underappreciated common denominator of the transimperial free-trade movement. Tracing the history of the American Cobdenite free-trade movement illuminates how the vast majority of AIL officers were free traders involved in a variety of Cobdenite free-trade-and-peace organizations [Figure 1]. Their subscription to peaceful economic cosmopolitanism was, for many of them, foundational to their anti-imperial activism. They opposed the formal American colonial acquisitions obtained from the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean and the Asia Pacific, as well as the subsequent informal coercive protectionist policies that the GOP forced upon Cuba and the formal U.S. colonies of Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

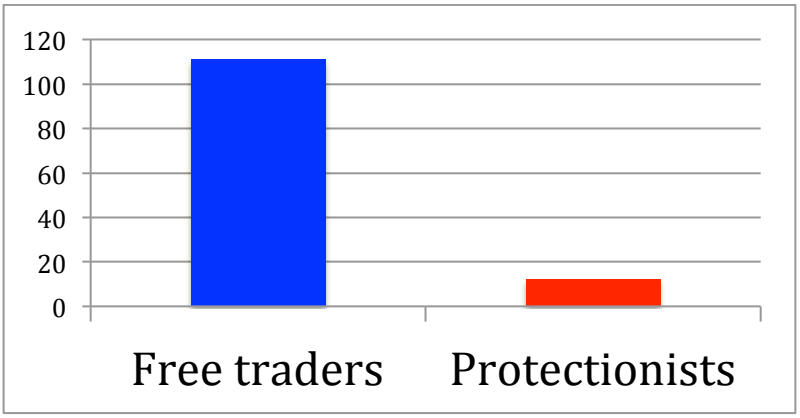

Figure 1: "The Economic Cosmopolitanism of the AIL." The above graph illustrates the ideological prevalence of free trade among the officers of the AIL.

An ideological adherence to Cobdenite free-trade principles, particularly its close association with peace and anti-imperialism, moved AIL leaders to action after 1898. Their anti-imperialism of free trade was put on further display in their post-1898 opposition to the informal and formal economic dimensions of what April Merleaux calls the "U.S. sugar empire."[42] Beginning with the 1901 *Downes v. Bidwell* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized the protectionist framework of the American closed-door empire by allowing the federal government to levy tariffs against the country's own colonies so as to insulate domestic U.S. sugar growers from competition with the empire's newly acquired sugar-producing colonies. American Cobdenites unsuccessfully opposed this economic nationalist imperial legislation. For example, Erving Winslow, an officer of both the AIL and the American Free Trade League, was quick to castigate the Supreme Court decision because it meant that not just Puerto Rico but also the Philippines would remain "outside the Constitution," and their tariff rates "subject to the arbitrary power of Congress."[43] AIL leaders continued to oppose subsequent instances of informal U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean. In 1915, for example, AIL officer Jane Addams led the Woman's Peace Party, a women's suffrage and free-trade-and-peace organization, against the Wilson Administration's attempt to coerce Haiti into signing a treaty granting twenty years of U.S. control over its finances and customs.[44]

Opposition to U.S. closed-door imperialism expanded into an even broader transimperial phenomenon once local critics among the former colonies of the Spanish Empire joined the free-trade fight. Cubans and Filipinos were among the loudest in voicing their dissent against U.S. imperialism of economic nationalism.

Cuba became an American informal colony after the island gained ostensible independence from Spain in 1898. The question of Cuban-American trade reciprocity soon followed. In 1902, it became one of the most hotly debated issues in Congress. Republican imperialists, at odds with both the AIL and anti-expansionists within their own party, wanted to implement protectionist reciprocity and control the island's finances and foreign trade. Cuban nationalists instead lobbied Congress for Cuban-American trade liberalization and greater local autonomy over the island's tariff policy. To this end, Luis V. de Abad, representing the tobacco interests and "all the laboring classes" of Cuba, asked the U.S. House Committee on Reciprocity with Cuba for a substantial decrease on the duties on Cuban cigars and raw tobacco. He argued that these protective tariffs were artificially lowering profits and creating unemployment on the island, added to which, "under the United States tariff it has been impossible for us to go into any foreign market." Luis V. Placé from Havana, representing a prominent group of Cuban merchants called the Corporaciones Económicas, argued that "as a Cuban I would like to give the United States free trade. The whole of American products imported into Cuba ought to be free . . . the proper solution of the Cuban problem is virtually free trade with both countries." In doing so, he also expressed his awareness of the issue's imperial power dynamics: "I ask for free trade on the understanding it is for you to grant it; we beg."[45]

The final version of the reciprocity treaty was a far cry from the free-trade version requested by the AIL, Cuban merchants, and independence leaders, as it only ended up providing a twenty percent discount on U.S. tariff rates. Disillusioned independence leaders like Juan Gualberto Gómez, head of Cuba's Liberal Party and an ally of José Martí in the Cuban independence movement, came out in opposition to reciprocity in its final form because, according to Mary Speck, the U.S. "had shown so little commitment to free trade." Other Cuban nationalists, however, gave their pragmatic support to the treaty, warning that to do otherwise would risk U.S. annexation. For them the message was clear; Cubans must either embrace U.S. informal imperialism through protectionist reciprocity or risk formal U.S. colonialism.[46]

A handful of years later, the side effects of the Republican Party's closed-door policy toward the Philippines were beginning to show. The U.S. government's protectionist policies were creating high prices on basic necessities, harming poverty-stricken Filipino consumers and various local businesses.[47] The protectionist policies soon sparked Filipino nationalist protests. On July 11, 1908, a large gathering took place in Manila, "to endorse the mass petition for the free entry of Philippine goods to American markets . . . prompted by the apparent indifference of the U.S. Senate" to the ill effects of its colonial protectionist policies. These 300 Filipino businessmen convened what became the Philippines's first Committee on Free Trade. Its officers included pro-independence advocate Pedro Guevera, future member of the Philippine Congress (1909-1912, 1916-1922) and the Nationalist Resident Commissioner for the Philippines (1923-1936); and Don Luis Hidalgo, a trade unionist and co-founder, in 1903, of the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines. Similar meetings were held across the islands, resulting in the signatures of thousands of supporters.[48] The GOP's turn-of-the-century protectionist imperial policies thus garnered substantial opposition not only from the AIL, but also nationalists in Cuba and the Philippines.

Free Trade Radicalism's Anti-Imperial Networks

The transimperial dimensions of this anti-imperial story become even more visible through closer examination of the Cobdenite ideas at play. Digging deep into the economic cosmopolitanism of the AIL reveals that free-trade ideas crossed the Atlantic in both directions. One particular Cobdenite offshoot was the free-trade ideology that became known in the United States as the single tax or Georgism, named after the American journalist and political economist Henry George. George's ideas crisscrossed U.S. and British imperial boundaries, becoming the leading vein of U.S. free-trade thinking to influence British Cobdenites.

The positions of George's followers on both sides of the Atlantic concerning free trade, anti-imperialism, and peace became even more radical than those of the more orthodox followers of the Manchester School. George first formulated his single tax theory – which held that a country could derive all of its revenue through a direct tax on the potential value of land – in his internationally bestselling book *Progress and Poverty* (1879). This single tax on land, according to George, was a panacea that would at once provide a steady revenue stream for local and federal governments; discourage land monopolization by incentivizing land development; and eliminate the need for all other forms of direct and indirect taxation, including tariffs. For George and his followers on both sides of the Atlantic, eliminating land monopolies and all other barriers to trade would undermine the economic causes of imperialism and war and thus bring prosperity and peace to the world.

George considered his land tax proposal a natural outgrowth of the transatlantic Cobdenite free-trade-and-peace tradition. Indeed, land reform had long been tied to Cobdenism, as George and his transatlantic disciples were keen to emphasize. In 1898, for example, amid scathing critiques of President McKinley's warmongering and autocratic maneuverings, the second issue of the newly launched Georgist publication the *Public* emphasized the movement's Cobdenite connections.[49] Georgists maintained their strong opposition to American colonialism through the *Public* and in their involvement in the AIL.[50]

George himself had converted from protectionism to Cobdenism in the 1860s, at which point he put his faith "in the international law of God as Cobden called free trade." George became an American member of the Cobden Club in 1881, taking an active role in various American Cobden Clubs, including the AFTL and the New York Free Trade Club. Following his conversion to Cobdenism, George aligned himself politically with the independent Republican Cobdenites who became known as Mugwumps after they threw their support behind Cleveland in the 1884 presidential election. He praised Cleveland's 1887 message to Congress as "a manly, vigorous, and most effective free-trade speech," and stumped for Cleveland's reelection amid the "Great Debate" of 1888.[51] George again supported Cleveland's 1892 presidential run, predicting to his friend and single tax disciple Louis F. Post that a world united "in the bonds of commerce and its guarantee of peace among the nations" was now near at hand.[52]

Following the 1879 publication of *Progress and Poverty*, George and his growing transatlantic following argued that Georgism was a natural extension of Cobdenism. Because of this, his single tax theory found an even stronger reception within Free Trade England than it did in Protectionist America. George himself spent a great deal of time during the 1880s travelling between the United States and Great Britain in an effort to popularize his free-trade ideas. The first British edition of *Progress and Poverty* appeared in 1881. It sold 100,000 copies within three years, spurring George to claim that his book had "circulated in Great Britain as no economic work had ever circulated before." His arrest and imprisonment during an

1881 visit to Ireland as a reporter for the *Irish World* only lent his ideas more transatlantic notoriety and sympathy in advance of his subsequent lecture tours in Britain. His radical ideas swept across Great Britain from the early 1880s onward, and modified versions of his single tax theory were adopted by Liberal and Labour Party platforms at the turn of the century.[53] Jane Cobden – a daughter of Richard Cobden and active in Britain's turn-of-the-century anti-imperial, Irish home rule, free trade, and women's suffrage movements – was among those sympathetic to Georgism. She connected the single tax movement to her father's mid-century push for "free trade in land," as did other British Cobdenites fired up by George's single tax philosophy.[54]

Even though Georgism was too radical for some orthodox Cobdenites in the United States, the two wings remained wedded to the transatlantic anti-imperialist struggle. Their internal differences over fiscal reform stemmed mainly from the fact that the Georgist position took an even more absolutist stance on free trade than did the Cobdenite doctrine that inspired it. In particular, where orthodox Cobdenites supported indirect taxation through minimal tariffs for revenue purposes only, George's new proposal suggested that all tariffs – and every other form of taxation, for that matter – ought to be replaced by a single direct tax on the estimated value of land. Georgists thus expounded a more absolute commitment to free trade than orthodox Cobdenites. Nevertheless, despite their differences in degree concerning free-trade cosmopolitanism, the two Cobdenite camps stood side-by-side in their common causes of anti-imperialism and peace through the AIL and other anti-imperialist and peace organizations between 1898 and 1920.

The transimperial ties between Cobdenite anti-imperialists on both sides of the Atlantic grew substantially with the addition of George and his disciples, and were strengthened further through the efforts of AIL officers Lucia and Edwin D. Mead. Lucia was, according to John M. Craig, "an uncompromising adherent to 'free trade' economic theories" and opposed U.S. colonialism, navalism, and the Monroe Doctrine. Edwin was a member of the New England Free Trade League and the American Peace Society, a co-founder of the Twentieth Century Club, and director of the World Peace Foundation upon its founding in 1910. Lucia and Edwin's peace internationalist worldviews crystalized following a trip to England in 1901, where they met with pro-Boer editor William T. Stead and British Cobdenite J. A. Hobson.[55] Hobson's critiques of the Boer War had a sizeable impact upon Lucia and Edwin's subsequent anti-imperial critiques. Lucia described their private meetings with Hobson and other British anti-imperialists as an "intellectual Thanksgiving."[56]

Soon thereafter, Edwin's Twentieth Century Club in Boston invited Hobson and fellow British anti-imperialist George H. Perris to lunch with the members of the New England branch of the AIL in late 1902, just as Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study* was making its transatlantic debut.[57] Hobson again addressed the AIL in 1903. Perris, an anti-militarist and absolute pacifist likewise furthered transimperial ties through his anti-imperialist lecture tour that took him to seven U.S. cities. The American Peace Society's publication *The Advocate of Peace* reported that Perris's last lecture, at Cooper Union, New York, garnered around 1,000 attendees.[58] It was also more than coincidental that Hobsonian critiques of U.S. financial imperialism became more pronounced at AIL meetings and in American anti-imperial critiques during and after Hobson and Perris's U.S. visit.[59] Nor did Hobson shy away from criticizing the U.S. protectionist system in the years to come.[60]

Even as more orthodox Cobdenites like Hobson strengthened the lines of communication within the transatlantic anti-imperial movement, Georgist Cobdenites were working across Anglo-American imperial boundaries to argue for anti-imperial

policies. The propagandistic efforts of Joseph and Mary Fels, for example, built upon these anti-imperial networks following their relocation to London from Philadelphia. Joseph, a wealthy retired U.S. soap manufacturer and AIL officer, and his wife Mary – a radical suffragist and peace advocate who eventually became the editor of the anti-imperial Georgist publication the *Public* — provided the single tax movement in Britain with much-needed financial bolstering at the turn of the century. Georgist reformers in Britain were among the main recipients of the Fels's international largesse, leading to the formation of the United League for the Taxation of Land Values (as the Georgist movement was known in Britain), as well as numerous local chapters scattered throughout the British Empire. The league sought to spread George's land policies throughout the British colonies, and thereby break up the land monopolies of the empire's aristocratic elites. Writing from London, Joseph laid this out in an open letter to Andrew Carnegie in 1910 entitled "Free Trade and the Single Tax vs. Imperialism." In it, Joseph argued that "if conditions of absolute free trade had prevailed," there would have been no Russo-Japanese war and no need for U.S. control of the Philippines.

> If Japan maintained no custom houses, the power that would try to rob her of her independence would have nothing to gain and very little to lose. Henry George made this clear in his *Protection or Free Trade*. . . . the interests which dragged the United States into the disgraceful Philippine adventure would not and could not have succeeded in doing so, had not the existence of land monopoly at home made it evident that the same institution would surely be continued by our government in the Philippines.

The unnatural "need of foreign markets," he continued, "which is so frequently used as an argument to justify wars of criminal aggression is a 'need' that would not be felt if the aggressing nation enforced justice at home" through adoption of the single tax and absolute free trade with the world.[61] As Mary similarly described it in 1916 just before taking part in the transatlantic travails of the Ford Peace Expedition, free trade through Georgist land reform would undermine colonialism by dismantling imperial demands for foreign markets and transportation networks wrought from protective tariffs.[62]

Anti-imperial and peace leaders like Joseph and Mary Fels thus believed that Georgism would undermine imperial expansion in three key ways. First, developing land to maximum efficiency would increase the global supply of raw materials, thereby undercutting a principal driver of imperial expansion. Second, it would undermine the militant influence of the landed aristocracy, a long-held goal of Georgists and orthodox Cobdenites alike. Third, absolute free trade would eliminate the market inefficiencies wrought from protectionism and monopolies, which they believed to be another key force behind the imperial search for foreign markets.

Conclusion

It may seem ironic that some of the leading anti-imperialist theories in the turn-of-the-twentieth century United States came from the leading empire of the day, but transimperial crossings were never limited to strategies of imperial rule; they also advanced anti-imperial dissent. Transatlantic free-trade cosmopolitanism – whether

orthodox Cobdenism or its more radical Georgist variant – fueled a major strain of Anglo-American anti-imperialism from the 1840s until the AIL's dissolution in 1920. The vast majority of AIL officers were Cobdenite free traders, influenced by British anti-imperialist thought. In a time of U.S. political, military, and economic assertion, they drew on principles expounded by British radicals.

The anti-imperialism of free trade was a transimperial phenomenon that came to encompass the British, American, and Spanish Empires. Especially in the British Empire and its rising American associate, Cobdenites struggled to replace the economic logic that undergirded imperialism with the free-trade principles they believed would undermine empire and foster peace. This association of free trade with anti-imperialism, in turn, was also embraced among businessmen, consumers, and nationalists within U.S. colonies in the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific following the Spanish-American War. Travelling across imperial boundaries, anti-imperial economic theories sought to undo the world that had produced them.

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[1] Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," *Journal of Southern History* 24 (Aug. 1958), 330 fn. 28; Adam Cooke, "'An Unpardonable Bit of Folly and Impertinence': Charles Francis Adams Jr., American Anti-Imperialists, and the Philippines," *New England Quarterly* 83 (June 2010): 313-338; Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 1968)*;* Frank Freidel, "Dissent in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 81 (1960): 167-184; Fred H. Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States, 1898-1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22 (Sept. 1935): 211-230; John M. Gates, "Philippine Guerillas, American Anti-Imperialists, and the Election of 1900," *Pacific Historical Review* 46 (Feb. 1977): 51-64; Gerald E. Markowitz, ed., *American Anti-Imperialism 1895-1901* (New York and London: The Garland Library of War and Peace, 1976); Erin Leigh Murphy, "Anti-imperialism during the Philippine-American War: Protesting 'Criminal Aggression' and 'Benevolent Assimilation'" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009); Daniel Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1972); Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Welch, Jr., "American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response," *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (May 1974): 233-253; James A. Zimmerman, "Who Were the Anti-Imperialists and the Expansionists of 1898 and 1899? A Chicago Perspective," *Pacific Historical Review* (Nov. 1977): 589-601; Jim Zwick, "The Anti-Imperialist League and the Origins of the Filipino-American Oppositional Solidarity," *American Journal* 24 (Summer 1998): 64-85.

[2] Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton in Tyrrell and Sexton, eds., *Empire's Twin: U.S. Anti-Imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 16.

[3] Lasch even went so far as to assert that American anti-imperialists ignored the imperialists' economic policies and ideas. Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," 322.

[4] Tompkins notes briefly how "there was a logical correlation between their free-trade views and their anti-imperialism, as there had been for Cobden and Bright, by whom they were also influenced in both respects." E. Berkeley Tompkins, "The Old Guard: A Study of the Anti-Imperialist Leadership," *Historian* 30 (May 1968), 375. See, also, E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970); David Patterson, *Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 74, 80. For the latter, see Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Eric T. Love, *Race over*

Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Gill H. Boehringer, "Black American Anti-Imperialist Fighters in the Philippine American War," *Black Agenda Report* (15 Sept. 2009); Brandon Byrd, "To Start Something to Help These People: African American Women and the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 21 (2015): 127-153; Kristin L. Hoganson, "'As Badly Off as the Filipinos': U.S. Women's Suffragists and the Imperial Issue at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Women's History* 13 (Summer 2001): 9-33; Erin Leigh Murphy, "Women's Anti-imperialism: 'The White Man's Burden,' and the Philippine-American War: Theorizing Masculinist Ambivalence in Protest," *Gender & Society* 23 (2009): 244-70; Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

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[7] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 108.

[8] Michael Patrick Cullinane, 'Transatlantic Dimensions of the American Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1899-1909', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8 (2010): 301-314.

[9] Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal reform* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 243.

[10] On American Anglophobia, see especially Jay Sexton, "Anglophobia in Nineteenth-Century Elections, Politics, and Diplomacy," in Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015): 98-117; Stephen Tuffnell, "'Uncle Sam is to Be Sacrificed': Anglophobia in Late Nineteenth-Century Politics and Culture," *American Nineteenth Century History* 12 (March 2011): 77–99; William C. Reuter, "The Anatomy of Political Anglophobia in the United States, 1865-1900," *Mid-America* 61 (April–July 1979): 117–32; Edward P. Crapol, *America for Americans: Economic Nationalism and Anglophobia, 1876-1896* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973).

[11] Richard Seymour, *American Insurgents: A Brief History of American Anti-Imperialism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), xv. In comparison to the American side, there is a wealth of scholarship on the economic ideologies of British anti-imperialists. See, et al., Cain, "Capitalism, Aristocracy and Empire"; Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-64* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Bernard Semmel, *The Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

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[15] Marc-William Palen, "Adam Smith as Advocate of Empire, *c*. 1870-1932," *Historical Journal* 57 (March 2014): 179-198.

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[22] Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade*, chap. 1.

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[55] Hobson, in turn, had been influenced by imperial theorist Gaylord Wilshire. See P. J. Cain, "Hobson, Wilshire, and the Capitalist Theory of Capitalism Imperialism," *History of Political Economy* (Fall 1985): 455-460. For Hobson and Cobdenism, see P. J. Cain, "J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898-1914," *Economic History Review* 31 (Nov. 1978): 565-584.

[56] John M. Craig, "Lucia True Ames Mead: American Publicist for Peace and Internationalism," Edward P. Crapol, ed., *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), 72-73.

[57] *Report of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the New England Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: New England Anti-Imperialist League, 1902), 8; "Imperialism: J. A. Hobson's New Book on its Growth and its Influence in British Politics," *New York Times* (15 Nov. 1902), BR5.

[58] *Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the New England Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: New England Anti-Imperialist League, 1903), 11; "Mr. Perris in America," *Advocate of Peace* 65 (Jan. 1903), 9-10.

[59] Et al., *Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the New England Anti-Imperialist League*, 5-7; *Report of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: Anti-Imperialist League 1909), 34-35. American sociologist and imperial theorist Thorstein Veblen, for example, reviewed Hobson's *Imperialism* quite favorably upon its publication and agreed with Hobson's central thesis. See Cain, "Capitalism, Aristocracy and Empire," 31-32.

[60] J. A. Hobson, *The Fruits of American Protection* (New York: Cassell, 1906).

[61] Joseph Fels, "Free Trade and the Single Tax vs. Imperialism: A Letter to Andrew Carnegie," (Dec. 1910), accessed online via http://www.cooperative-individualism.org/fels-joseph_free-trade-and-the-single-tax-vs-imperialism-1910.htm

[62] "Public Opinion Force to End Great Wars, Mrs. Fels Declares," July 31, 1916 [unknown newspaper], Folder 7, Box 5, Joseph and Mary Fels Papers, Historical Society of Philadelphia.